

Message Text

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46

ACTION EA-06

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FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4911

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY MANILA PRIORITY

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENTIANE 5027

LIMDIS

BANGKOK FOR RED

MANILA FOR USADB

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: EAID, MASS, PFOR, LA

SUBJ: US POSTURE TOWARDS LAOS

REF: A. SECSTATE 172367

B. BANGKOK 15118

C. SECSTATE 175058

1. C.T. QUESTIONS TENOR OF RECENT MESSAGES (REFTELS) AND BELIEVES DEPARTMENT SHOULD ISSUE NEW GUIDANCE ON OUR POSTURE TOWARDS LAOS. BASIC ASSUMPTION REMAINS THAT, IF SOME SATISFACTORY SOLUTION IS REACHED ON QUESTION OF OUR TWO COMPOUNDS, WE SHALL BE ABLE TO MAINTAIN MISSION HERE CUT TO ITS ESSENTIALS WITH ONLY CHARGE, ONE MILITARY ATTACHE, ONE INFORMATION CULTURAL OFFICER AND NO AID.

2. C.T. BELIEVES THAT WE HAVE SUCCEEDED IN PLACING RESPONSIBILITY FOR PRESENT STATE OF LAO-AMERICAN
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RELATIONS SQUARELY ON PGNU. REDUCTION OF AMERICAN

MISSION AND ELIMINATION OF USAID WERE CARRIED OUT UNDER GREAT PRESSURES AND HARASSMENT; ALL OBSERVERS, INCLUDING SOVIETS AND EAST EUROPEANS, UNDERSTAND SITUATION AND DO NOT EXPECT EITHER EARLY ARRIVAL OF NEW AMERICAN AMBASSADOR OR RENEWED AID. THIS RECOGNITION OF DEVELOPMENTS SERVES TO BUTTRESS MAINTENANCE OF OUR MISSION.

3. C.T. BELIEVES THAT OUR POSTURE IN IMMEDIATE FUTURE SHOULD BE PASSIVE. WE SHOULD AIM AT ESTABLISHING EMBASSY ON NORMAL BASIS, THAT IS RESTORING CONTROL OVER OUR COMPOUNDS AND INSURING PGNU OBSERVES ACCEPTED DIPLO-MATIC PRACTICES. WE SHOULD OTHERWISE AVOID TAKING INITIATIVES; WE SHOULD RESIST INNATE AMERICAN TENDENCY TO ACT; WE SHOULD FLOAT WITH CURRENT. SPECIFICALLY, WE SHOULD NOT TAKE LEAD IN PROPOSING REVIEW OF NAM NGUM DAM. MANILA 10021. CONFIRMS OUR EXPECTATION THAT ADB, ON ITS OWN, WILL REACH CONCLUSION THAT UNDER PRESENT CIR-CUMSTANCES THIS UNDERTAKING SHOULD BE POSTPONED. A PROPOSAL INITIATED BY US TO OPPOSE COVERING THE OVER-RUN AND MORE IMPORTANT TO WITHDRAW CONTRIBUTION OF FUNDS ALREADY OBLIGATED WILL BE INTERPRETED AS A PUNITIVE ACT AGAINST PGNU. SUCH ACTION COULD WELL REVERSE ATTITUDES HERE -- AND ELSEWHERE -- AND ENGENDER SYMPATHY FOR A LAOS SUBJECTED TO PUNISHMENT BY VINDICTIVE US GOVERN-MENT. LET THAIS MAKE THEIR VIEWS KNOWN; LET ADB REACH ITS OWN CONCLUSIONS; AND LET US NOT BE SO BUSY. OUR POSTURE WOULD BE SOMEWHAT ANALOGOUS TO THE POSITION WE TOOK ON FEOF: WE GAVE NOTHING ADDITIONAL TO LAOS OUR-SELVES BUT DID NOT OBSTRUCT CONTRIBUTIONS BY OTHER DONORS, WHICH WE COULD HAVE DONE MERELY BY REFUSING TO SIGN THE FEOF AGREEMENT.

4. THE SAME LOGIC APPLIES TO QUESTION OF LAO AIRCRAFT AT UDORN. ALTHOUGH, AS WE HAVE SAID, THIS IS NOT AN OVER-RIDING MATTER HERE AND CONSEQUENCES ARE LESS IMPORTANT THAN LIKELY EFFECTS ON THAI-LAO RELATIONS.

5. AS REGARDS OUR FUTURE ROLE IN FEOF (STATE 172367), WHICH WE SHALL DISCUSS SEPARATELY, OUR ROLE MUST NE-CONFIDENTIAL

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CESSARILY BE ALMOST TOTALLY PASSIVE. WE AGREE FEOF PARTICIPATION IS USEFUL MEANS OF GETTING PGNU STATISTICS ON THE ECONOMY, BUT SINCE WE PLAN NO FURTHER CONTRIBUTION, OUR ENCOURAGING MEETINGS WILL SIMPLY RAISE EXPECTATIONS THAT -- CONTRARY TO EVERYONE'S UNDERSTANDING -- WE MIGHT YET RESUME OUR FORMER ROLE OF LEADERSHIP IN THE FUND AND AGAIN BECOME CONTRIBUTOR.

6. IN SUM, C.T. RECOMMENDS THAT WE AIM FOR NEAR GROUND
ZERO BASE OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS FROM WHICH WE CAN
OBSERVE DEVELOPMENTS HERE AND IN INDOCHINA AND ON
WHICH, IF IT SERVES OUR INTERESTS, WE COULD REBUILD
OUR POSITION. WE SHOULD AVOID INITIATIVES THAT
INDICATE LARGER INTERESTS IN LAOS THAN WE HAVE OR THAT
APPEAR PUNITIVE IN NATURE; PUNITIVE ACTION WOULD ONLY
PLACE BURDEN OF DETERIORATED LAO-AMERICAN RELATIONS
BACK ON OUR SHOULDERS.

CHAPMAN

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